

GM just the latest trade war casualty

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Mari Keels transfers a front end of a General Motors Chevrolet Cruze during assembly at Jamestown Industries, Wednesday, Nov. 28, 2018, in Youngstown, Ohio. Jamestown Industries supplies parts for the Chevy Cruze. GM said Monday that Lordstown will stop making the Chevy Cruze by March, at a cost of 1,400 union jobs on top of the 2,700 lost there since President Donald Trump took office. (AP Photo/Tony Dejak)

The latest casualties in President Donald Trump's trade wars are nearly 15,000 jobs at General Motors. GM plans to shut down five plants in North America, citing weaker demand for cars. But there's no escaping the fact that Trump's aluminum and steel tariffs have cost the company \$1 billion so far.

Auto manufacturers had warned of exactly this outcome months ago, predicting that tariffs could cost hundreds of thousands of American jobs. Despite their superior knowledge of heavy industrial import and export markets, Trump appears to have ignored them, adopting his unconvincing I-know-better stance.

At rallies in Ohio, Trump promised his supporters that manufacturing jobs are "coming back." But Ohio is among the states affected by the GM shutdown. False bravado and tariffs apparently don't lead to more jobs.

The GM plant closures are the latest casualties of Trump's trade wars and strong reminders to the Republican Party that blue-collar loyalty is likely to have a short shelf life. If Trump's trade strategy doesn't start showing success soon, GOP politicians could soon find themselves having to choose between defending their constituents or their mercurial party leader.

The GOP first promised that massive tax cuts for corporations and the wealthiest Americans would spur growth and lead to higher wages. GM received a large tax break from the Republican bill and still opted to open a new SUV plant in Mexico. Harley-Davidson announced in June it would move some of its production overseas to stay competitive. Trump's tariffs on cheaper steel and aluminum from China hiked production costs for industries that relied heavily on those imports.

The Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, has published a list of more than 200 companies hurt by Trump's tariffs. Nearly \$880 million worth of products in Missouri have been affected, leading to layoffs at a Missouri nail manufacturer and sharply diminished export markets for soybean farmers.

The state's overwhelming electoral support for Trump has been paid back with disproportionate damage to its manufacturing and agricultural sectors. You're welcome, Missouri.

Trump seemed more anxious than ever to strike a face-saving truce with China at a G-20 summit in Argentina this week. If it happens, that'll be as close as Americans will get to an admission by

him that he made the wrong call in choosing direct confrontation and harsh public rhetoric over quiet, patient diplomacy.

Regardless of how many times Trump tweets that America is winning the trade wars he started, he can't fool people who don't have their jobs anymore. Factory workers, farmers and consumers who are paying more for imported products will continue bearing the brunt of Trump's rash, shoot-from-the-hip decision-making process.

Voters hit by plant closures and plowed-under soybean crops will remember the president's empty promises — and the GOP's unwillingness to check him.